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## **Post-Operative Instructions Carpal Tunnel Release**

### **Bandages & Ace Wrap:**

Your post-operative dressing has several layers you need to understand in order to properly care for your hand, wrist and forearm during the 2 weeks following your surgery. Your incision was closed with fine non-absorbable sutures that will be removed in the office at approximately 7-10 days after surgery. The incision line is then coated with a thin film of antibacterial ointment, Bacitracin, followed by a non-adherent mesh gauze that is easily peeled away from the skin once your dressing is taken down in the office.

The more superficial layers of your dressing contain 4x8in gauze that is loosely wrapped with soft cotton cast padding. The outermost visible layer is called Bias. This is a stretchy, elastic cotton wrap that won't constrict blood flow into or out of your hand. I use Bias rather than Ace bandages as the latter can often be put on too tightly and act as a tourniquet.

Occasionally, there will be a small amount of blood in this dressing, which is nothing to worry about, however if you see a lot of bleeding please call my office. I will remove this dressing 7-10 days after surgery and place a large Band-Aid over your sutures. At this time you no longer need to wear your wrist splint.

### **Washing & Bathing:**

You should keep the dressing clean and dry until I see you in the office following your surgery. A watertight plastic bag with rubber bands around the opening work well while showering. However, some find it easier to take a bath and rest the operated hand outside of the tub. Once the 3<sup>rd</sup> day has been reached, the wound may get wet with gentle running water and soap. The wound may not get immersed in any still bodies of water (bath, pool, hot tub, lake, ocean, etc...) until 7-10 days after your surgery.

### **Motion, Ice & Elevation:**

It is extremely important that postoperative swelling is minimized so that your hand and wrist do not get stiff. To help prevent swelling it is important to frequently apply ice and keep your hand elevated above your heart level for the first 48 hours after surgery. An ice pack from a store or cubes from your freezer placed in a zip lock bag work well. These should always be wrapped in a small towel like a washcloth and then applied to the dressing, 10 minutes on the front and 10 minutes on the back. This should be done roughly once an hour while awake. Never leave the ice on for more than 20 minutes and if the cold sensation becomes painful remove it immediately.

Of utmost importance is that you wiggle your fingers by gently pumping your fist open and closed for about a minute or two every hour while awake. This helps keep your finger tendons and joints supple and minimizes scarring around your nerve. Additionally, this promotes circulation through your extremity with further diminishes swelling.



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**NOTE:** When you wake up from surgery your fingers will be numb from the numbing agent I administer just prior to your surgery and at the termination of your case. This will usually wear off by the end of the day. It is completely fine for you to move your fingers while they are numb.

**Hand Therapy:**

A small percentage of patients will need hand therapy following surgery. When you are seen at your first post-operative appointment I will decide if therapy is necessary in your case.

For those that need hand therapy, the goal of therapy is to first assess how your body responded to the surgical procedure. Your therapist will start range of motion and strength exercises on your first visit. If they find anything unexpected they will let me know right away.

**Follow up appointment:**

We try to give all of our patients a follow-up office visit at the time we schedule your surgery. I will usually see you 7-10 days after surgery to check your wound, range of motion and look for any excessive swelling and remove stitches.

**Follow up appointment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Medications:**

Ibuprofen and/or Tylenol every 6 hours are sufficient for pain control after this procedure. Please use these agents as directed on the bottle. I do not prescribe narcotic pain killers for this surgery.

**What to watch out for:**

- Worsening pain despite taking pain medication
- Persistent drainage from the wound after surgery
- Foul smelling drainage
- Increasing redness, pain or swelling around the surgical site
- Fever greater than 101
- Unable to keep food or water down for more than one day

**Who to call for questions or problems:**

If you are having problems or there are questions you need answered then please call our office at 732-349-8454 and our staff will assist you. Our hours of operation for our phone room are as follows:



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Monday through Thursday 8:30am- 4:30pm and Friday 8:00am – 4:00pm.

We realize that after surgery some problems or questions are urgent and cannot wait until normal working hours. Under these circumstances we have a service that will get the message to a doctor on call for our office by calling the main number 732-349-8454.

**\*\*\*If an emergency were to occur please go to the nearest ER for immediate attention.**

**Michael Pensak, M.D.**